

「ショート★ストーリーズ」

3分間の

ボーイズ・ガール

Shortstory Boy Meets Girl in three minutes.

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Keiichi Hirose / Others

『バカレテテストと召喚獣』が大ヒットの人気作家。TVアニメ2期放映中。

《その他執筆作家 掲載順》

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Shiramiho / Others

カバレイラスト担当。今回は爽やかな二人の恋の始まりのイメージで。繋いだ手の間から射し込む光がポイント。

《その他イラストレーター》

口絵：庭、零花、TIN CUTEG、

扉絵：そん、千葉サドル、すばち、

しらび、kco。

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3 Minutes Boy Meets Girl - Chapter 03

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Chapter 3

[image]

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I stand in front of the luxurious campus that gave a majestic vibe, the High School I hoped to enter.

At the entrance, there's a sign with the words 'Please head this way to the school admission interview←'.

This may be a door leading to a dream, but to me, I see a graveyard of dreams.

The chilly wind of midwinter blew by.

But I didn't feel any cold.

That's because I'm in no mood to pay attention to such things. My entire body is probably numb all over.

The adults are often nagging away at the cram school teaching methods prevalent in current times, but I really want to ask them, aren't you educated through this method as well? What stupid things are you doing then?

It's because they're always yapping away that my dream school now holds its entrance interviews after the Common Tests! That began two years ago!

It's still plausible if it were some AO exam or some admission recommendation, but after the normal written exams, we still need

to go through some practical tests (for certain subjects only), and continue with interviews. According to rumors, these aren't child's play; but important parts of the entrance exams.

Anyway, can I enter this High School? To add on, can I complete this delusion of a plan? The interview that'll last for approximately 15 minutes today shall decide the direction I take in my life.

My heart's beating wildly, almost about to pop out of my mouth.

"I wanna go home..."

What interview? I can't do it at all.

It's not that I'm bad at interacting with others, but an interview's a whole lot different as compared to interacting between friends.

I did two mock interviews in school before, and they were so bad the examining teacher's face was cringing. The others were about the same, but I think mine were exceptionally bad amongst them.

I would always fumble with my words, say the wrong things, and even bite my tongue accidentally. Once I make a mistake, the anxiety within me will cause me to make more mistakes. Because of that, my mind will become confused, to a point where I don't know what I'm saying.

Be honest and say what you want to say. But even if the examiner said so, that it's a good thing to be honest, my mind's all confused because my inspiration to talk is gone.

Argh~even now, I still feel like dying. I really want to find a hole to sneak into.

I never had a proper talk with any adults other than my parents and relatives, and now, I have to talk about 'myself' and 'my dream's and all sorts of things in front of those adults. Spare me the agony already.

So please, don't get down to the bottom of things and ask me everything!

Please!?

But no matter how much I earnestly pray for it in my heart, it won't work. Time continues to tick down.

“Argh~! Is it time to gather now~ Damn it~”

At this moment, I, who've no courage to run away, can only take off my coat and walk into the school building, stammered as I gave my test ID, the middle school I graduated from, my name, and I arrived at the rest room.

“I'll call for you a moment later, so please wait over there. The bathroom's just right outside, please make use of it when you want to.”

“O-O-Okay! I-I get...it”

The woman leading me “No need to fret over it. It's alright.” gives me a wry smile, and leaves the room.

There is no other student in this room other than me.

And she tells me not to fret.

Even if she said so, I have to be respectable when an adult treats me politely.

And this rest room is no different from the reception room. What am I supposed to do about how sunken the sofa is?

Well, I'll be doomed if I don't sort out what I want to say. If I enter the unique atmosphere of an interview with a blank mind and get questioned by those adults, there'll only be a disastrous situation.

Just say out your own dreams; that was what an upperclassman of mine said.

Haha. I chuckled.

To me, there's nothing I can just spew out—

Knock knock, there was a sturdy knocking sound from the door.

“Yes...I’m inside!”

It’s time. Already!? Isn’t it too fast!? What’s the point of me being inside the rest room?

I harbor a great umbrage within me as I had this thought, and get up from my seat.

“Ah, just sit where you are. It’s another interviewee coming in.”

The guide told me, and from behind her, a girl dressed in navy blue sailor uniform walked in.

—I inadvertently gasped.

Normally, my rating of a girl will be divided between pretty and cute, but this girl managed to scoff aside such dualistic parameters.

This girl’s extremely pretty, extremely cute, and extremely beautiful.

It feels like she’s the embodiment of all the terms relating of beauty I can think of.

She has droopy eyes, a petite face, and a slender build.

Inexplicably, she has a bit of an otherworldly presence around her.

Especially shocking is her silky smooth long hair. This is the first time I’m seeing someone with such beautiful hair from close range.

The female guide repeated the same instructions to the girl as she did to me.

The girl in sailor uniform remained silent and nodded her head tersely.

The guide then walked out of the room.

One, two, three seconds. The girl stood there, unmoving, as she stared at the door.

“Th...Th-th-thank you, very much! I-I-I understand!”

The girl suddenly lowered her head at the door when there was no one there.

...Eh? What's the situation now?

The girl lifts her head again, and she stops.

One second, two seconds, three seconds..

And then, she tentatively turns around. Once her eyes catch sight of me, her face immediately becomes flush red.

“Erm...that's because...I'm being nervous...!”

She shook her head hard as she waved her hands flusteredly.

“Ah...ahh, that's why...”

That's why...she's a lot more dull-witted than usual or something? If that's the case, it'll be a real pity.

Speaking of which, is she really going to be alright for the interview?

“I'm an interviewee too”, I say as I prompt her to sit down.

But it's really great to see someone more tense than I am. I can at least calm myself somewhat upon seeing her. Ah, I think this is what they mean by feeling comfort from seeing someone is a more dire state than I am.

I stare at the girl, who has her head lowered, and her hands were fidgeting about.

She's cute, very cute.

And because she's so cute, I'm a little attracted by her.

She feels a little hard to approach, like some rich princess or something.

Tick, tock.

The sound of the clock in the room, which I had never noticed, clearly rings in my consciousness.

There's only two people in the room, me and the girl. Both of us haven't done anything, and our eyes haven't met.

It seems there's still some time until the interview begins.

...Shall I start talking with her about something?

Just when I start to think about it, another form of tension rises within me.

What shall I say to her?

The girl immediately lifts her eyes and met mine's.

Swoosh. I immediately lower my stare, and from a corner of my eyes, I see the girl doing the same thing as I did.

What do I do about this atmosphere? It's making my heart itch.

It'll be troubling to be talked to in a rest room before an interview, is it not? Maybe she's sorting through what she wants to say...ahh, speaking of which, what do I do about myself? The reasons why I chose this school, the good things about this school? I wanted to finalize what I wanted to say yesterday, but I was unable to do so before I somehow fell asleep. I also did nothing today, and before I knew it, it's about time for the interview. It's over. It's too late for me to do anything now. I'll rot away before I can even break into pieces—

“W...well...about the interview. I-I heard that success is decided within 3 minutes!”

This sudden voice caused my body to jerk in surprise.

I turn towards the girl, and find her staring at me with her eyes blazing.

“3 minutes...? I thought...the interview’s 15 minutes long?”

Pressed by the girl’s stare, I hastily answer.

Our stares never met right before this. It seems she’s the type of person who won’t back down once she sets her mind on something.

But I know she’s trying her best to tell me something. I just wish that I can understand her.

“Ahh...hm. Isn’t it written on a book listing strategies for an interview?”

After I said this, the girl nods stiffly.

Okay, now that’s a successful explanation.

As the girl started this conversation, I can naturally continue on.

“Why 3 minutes?”

“Because, the first impression, is very important.”

“Ahh, I see. I heard of that before, but as far as I know, the first impression is decided within 3 seconds or 30...”

“3, minutes!”

The girl widens her eyes as she frantically emphasizes. This princess here is going rampant.

“Eh!? Ah, sorry!”

What’s going on!? Did I say something to anger her? I wonder as I apologize.

“Ah...sorry.”

The girl then lowered her head dejectedly. No no, what exactly is going on here?

“...3 seconds, or 30 seconds is too short. If you don’t spend enough time together, you won’t understand...if you don’t, it’ll be troubling, if you make a decision, at that instant or something.”

“O-okay. In other words, though there’s a lot of sayings about how first impressions are made within a short time, it’s actually done in 3 minutes since it’s not too long or too short? That’s why you want to say that the first 3 minutes of an interview is very important.”

The girl nods twice stiffly. It seems she’s a little happier now, probably because I understood her. Good good.

...Speaking of which, is it really alright to go for the interview like that?

“Once I enter the room, I greet them, introduce my name, my identification number, school name, sit down, talk for a little; that will last 3 minutes.”

“That’s how an interview goes. But speaking of which, it’ll take about 30 seconds until you sit down. The ‘talk for a little’ part will have to go on for about 2 minutes and 30 seconds, right?”

I feel this ‘talk for a little part’ is very important. Is it really okay to just touch on this aspect so casually?

“Conversation, ball, catch...”

“Eh?”

“...Catch, ball...?”

“Oh, yes. In an interview conversation, catchball is important.”

Her English is really weak. However, I think catchball is Gratuitous English, no? (TN: it actually means catching a ball, or to take a conversational topic and respond accordingly)

“Ahh...!”

“I can’t do any catchball here. Speaking of which, what’s with you?”

“...I forgot to mention ‘knock on the door’ just now.”

The girl suddenly lowered her head dejectedly.

“Let’s get back to what we’re talking about. Isn’t that a good thing? You won’t forget about what to do when you take an interview formally.”

Hm...I do find her to be an interesting person, but I don’t think it’ll be a good impression on the interviewer.

It seems she still can’t get used to school lifestyle too well, and if I’m a teacher, I probably wouldn’t want her to enroll in this school. Oh! Is that some great discovery I made? That there’s a higher chance of me being accepted if I show that I’m very good at adapting to school life?

I turn my head around as I look over at the girl’s face, and she tilts her head with a smile.

She’s cute...no, wait

I’m thinking that this girl doesn’t seem to understand really well this discovery I just made.

There’s no way out of this? I sighed, and the girl immediately shows a look of despair as she’s ostensibly defeated.

“...Because...I’m nervous, I...become this naggy...sorry,”

Now will be a situation: “Quiz question, is there a need to apologize here?”

Well...

Maybe...here?

“Erm, that sigh just now wasn’t over anything. It’s not about you.”

The girl immediately shows a smile. Now that’s the correct answer!

It’s not because she has a lot of varied expressions, but that she’s a

girl whose feelings are written clearly on her face. It's really inexplicable.

"How good...you can, really talk...even though, I'm really bad at this."

Her beautiful eyes were staring at me.

"...That's, great."

It's awkward. Very awkward."

This might be the first time a girl calls me by the pronoun 'you (anata)!' (Up till now, she has been calling me 'you (anta)').

At first, I thought that she was a very shy girl, but it seems that she's just bad at speaking. She expresses her feelings clearly, and is very naive. What will this kind of girl say during an interview? I inadvertently wonder.

She can probably talk about her beautiful and magnificent dreams with honest feelings.

I guess...that's completely different from me.

The conversation pauses here.

The guide still hasn't arrived.

Has it been 3 minutes?

It's true that after I walk into the room, made a self-introduction, and answer about 2, 3 questions, there'll be a firm first impression made.

It's just a personal feeling, but I guess it's been 3 minutes since I met this girl.

What's my impression of this girl?

Speaking of which, she's already so tense, but she's staring at me nervously and giving me tips.

If I don't repay her in some sense, I'm not fit to be a man.

"Oh~ that's right, I heard there'll be in-depth questioning of what students 'hope to do' and 'what their dreams are' in this interview. This is what my upperclassman told me."

However, those issues might be the crux for an arts course, as compared to the normal subjects, so I guess that's something they have to ask either way.

"Maybe they'll ask you that question within those 3 minutes you talk about."

Well, even though I say so, I never considered over this! This is bad.

"What I want to do, my dreams."

The girl mutters, and then nods twice with a calm face.

"You seem very relaxed."

Upon hearing me say this, the girl widens her eyes and tilts her head.

"That's because, it's fine, as I talk about what I think."

"Even if you say so...that's the difficult part, right?"

Whether it's about what I want to do, or my dreams, can I actually answer them honestly during an interview? That's not something I'm really keen on talking with others, and less so in an interview.

This is what I want to do, and after saying this, I'll fulfill my dream if I continue on straight to my goal. A student in the Third Year of Middle School isn't so naive to believe in such a notion.

A High School entrance exam only takes particular attention on the reality, and not on dreams.

That's why having dreams is not a stupid thing. There's a chance for it to come true. There are thoughts where we think our ordinary jobs are boring, where we only live once, but dreams are a

counterbalance to this messy, troublesome logical world.

And if I really say anything stupid, I'll definitely be laughed at.

No, it'll be really bad. That'll be a situation where I'll have to give up.

"What is it, that you want to do?"

Suddenly, the girl asks me directly.

This is a crisis before the interview. Damn it, what's she asking here? Hold on a moment.

She silently stares at me. Those moist eyes cause my heart to waver, just as she did in my impression of her during the first three minutes. This pressure is no lesser than facing an interviewer.

"Well, hmm, I'm in this arts stream. I want to sculpt some things, like wood, stone or, something solid."

Why am I stammering so much? I could have just stated it clearly.

But as expected, it's a little embarrassing to declare like this. However—

—What do you want to do in the future?

—That's impossible.

If anyone is to ask me this, it'll be all for naught.

"...Sculpt?"

The girl asks doubtfully

"Hm, well, that's right."

The girl's face immediately brighten, and she shows a smile.

...Perhaps she has turned this misunderstanding into a quiz, and her positive look is really dazzling.

She opens her mouth and asks,

“And...your dream?”

I don't really hope for this question to pop up, but it's already too late.

My mind isn't thinking much, but my mouth's moving on it's own.

“Ah~...my dreams. I did think of sculpting, and if possible, the best case scenario will be to enter Zokei University. But in fact, there're very few people who rely on this for a living, and my parents are opposed to this. Ah, this school is also focused on the arts, there's a competitive studying environment, the average grades are high here, and some people went on to good universities, so my parents allowed me to come here...and after this, once I go to university, work, and sculpt a little...eh...? Has this become a 'why do I want to come to this school' topic out of a sudden? So, well...”

As I continue to talk, the content within becomes hollow.

The girl remains unmoved as she stares at me; no, it's not that she's unmoved. She understands my feelings well, and feels a little dejected.

The attitude I have has spread on to the girl

It's as dull as ever—

“I, want to do calligraphy.”

Her voice is very frigid.

This line from her instantly pierces through my heart, probably because I'm already used to how she would stammer before this.

This is some destructive power, and the results were obvious.

“I want to write a lot of wonderful works and show them to many people.”

This really feels like a line a brat will say.

But why? She's emphasizing on this so strongly, so nobly, with such attitude I can't possibly fathom.

"A calligraphy course? You want to do calligraphy?"

The girl nods.

"Is it your dream to write a good piece and present them to others?"

The girl shakes her head, and her long flowing hair sways about.

That's not her dream?

I don't dare to ask directly, but at this point, I can only ask.

I feel a sharp chill on my back.

"...And your dream?"

Will you not say it to me?

"To get to the top."

She's aiming for the top.

Anyway, let me translate this a little.

Speaking of which, where did she graduate from?

"I'll say, the top...ah, you're aiming to be top in the school? That's amazing..."

The girl shakes her head to deny this.

"Ohh, then well. The top amongst the High School students in our era..."

She shakes her head again.

"A-Are you aiming to be the best in Japan..."

She shakes her head forcefully.

“Th-That’s right! How can that be possible...”

“I’m aiming higher.”

“Eh?”

“Higher.”

The girl says.

It seems I didn’t mishear it.

“Are...are you aiming for the best in the world...?”

She shakes her head.

“~Then what is it exactly!?”

“The best in history.”

This is, well, because.

Hey, there’s no way I can comment on this.

“Ha-hahaha. That’s...completely impossible. How can you possibly beat those greats in the past?”

Oi, the me now, stop laughing at her.

At this rate, even I...will become like those who laugh at me.

“...I know, it’s impossible, or something...but even if, I know, I still will think about it.”

The girl remains unmoved, and there’s no doubt in her eyes.

She says this seriously as she conveys her dreams.

“If you don’t aim for the best, once you reach your target... everything will be over, you know?”

She’s saying that if she sets her target too low, it’ll be over once she attains it, and she won’t be able to climb up any further.

“A-and...being first, means, you’re the best.”

And she says such an innocent line.

THis is a line that requires a lot of filling in, and a lot of explanations need to be added.

But I guess that’s enough.

There’s no need to add on the rhetorics. It’ll simply be enough for me to express my true thoughts.

Ahh...looks like that’s an undoubted truth to me.

If this girl can overcome her anxiety and say such things, she’ll definitely be able to pass the interview.

And in this situation, I definitely won’t be able to pass since I’m so tense.

An interview is determined within 3 minutes, but if I look at it the other way, those 3 minutes can influence the decision made in an interview, so this saying seems to be completely correct.

For I manage to determine my impression of this girl within 3 minutes.

This girl is nice, has potential, and is someone with value who can pass the exams.

Ahh, but on the other hand, this girl also has a first impression on me too.

This person is nothing impressive—perhaps this is the impression she has of me. And then, after our conversation, I’m just as she has thought, that ‘I’m someone who’s not impressive’.

There’s some divide between that girl and me nobody can cross, so from today onwards, there won’t be able meeting between—

The girl stares at me silently.

She's probing for my reaction, and looks really downhearted.

It seems there's a white canvas laid out in front of me.

Is that hinting for me that there's another chance to write over again—what a joke.

It's already too late, useless, reckless, futile, impossible.

There are bright colors from the past, coloring the white canvas again.

—What do I want to do in the future?

—That's impossible.

A wall is built up within me.

The impression that was affirmed before.

These will never change, can't be changed, can't be changed... can't be changed.

—What is it, that you want to do?

—What I want to do, my dreams.

I recall those innocent words, and then—

I want to dye them on the canvas with these hands of mine.

If it's too late to even draw graffiti over them, I want to draw on it, even if it's a few strokes.

“L-Listen up!”

Before I realize it, I'm already shouting away, like I'm hungry for something.

The girl's expression remains unmoved as she nods slightly.

I restrain the feelings that were about to leap forward, and watch my volume as I say,

“I, want to sculpt.”

She nods.

“I want to bring a material in front of me, and let my mind think blankly. Sometimes, I can immediately think of how the work should look once its completely, what I have to do at certain areas to make it as I’ve imagine. It’s like instinct in a certain sense.”

She nods again.

“And so, once I complete the work I imagine, I’ll be really happy.”

This time, she nods twice.

“I know that my skills are really bad now, but there’s still a lot of room to improve. I don’t know how much room I have to improve exactly, but I want to try my best.”

This is—

“I want to take the path of sculpting and reach the highest point I can reach. That’s my dream.”

It’s really troublesome to keep my voice down. My body feels hot. There’s no room to say anything else.

It already took me all my effort to barely turn my thoughts into words that can reach the other person.

The girl doesn’t nod.

But in response, she gives a V-sign.

There’s no need for her to say anything now?

“The interview, will pass.”

For a moment, I didn’t realize the meaning behind her words.

After a while, I realize she’s assuring me that I can pass the interview.

Really? But I won't say this.

This action, I feel, is the one that will chase the shadow within me.

"Ah...you'll pass too! Once you calm down a little and say what you want, you'll definitely pass! You can be more confident!"

The girl nods gently, and shows a flower-like smile.

"I've brought, self-confidence. My anxiety, is gone."

All the better.

I look at the watch. It's about time.

Just a while ago, I was thinking of running away, and now, I'm a little expectant of the interview that's about to come. There's really a major change in attitude.

I slump limply into the sofa, and my back's surrounded by a soft feeling.

And then, the girl shows a tentative expression.

"...Sorry?"

"...What?"

It's an apology in the form of a question? Now this is a tough question.

"Don't you, feel...troubled when, I talked to you?"

I shake my head.

"Because I read that, when chatting in the rest room, I can reduce, my anxiety...I-I'm doing this, for myself. So, sorry."

So she's apologizing for taking the initiative to talk to me?

"...If it can, help ease your anxiety, I'll, be really happy...are you still nervous?"

She'll be happy if she can ease our tensions...she's really a nice person!

"Feeling good. Speaking of which, you really helped me out here... if you hadn't talked to me, it'll be really bad."

The me now really has to thank many parties. Like this school that set the interviewee order, and the girl for reading a book listing strategies for interviews.

"You're, very kind."

The girl says this with an undoubted, firm tone, believing it to be the truth.

What? Isn't her impression of me rather decent? Did it happen from halfway through?: Or was it like this right from the beginning?

The girl's face loosen, and she looks happy.

At this moment, there's a knock on the door, and the female guide shows her face from between the gap made by the ajar door.

"—kun. Sorry to keep you waiting. If you're done with your preparations, please come over."

"...Okay!"

Feeling a little reluctant, I answer the female guide forcefully and get up.

Upon hearing my answer, she gives a chuckle.

"Do your best." She says, and retreats to the corridor.

I walk towards the door as I say,

"I'll see how it goes first. leave it to me!"

I show a thumbs up.

And the girl answers me with a pinky swear.

...Why the pinky?

“...Ah...I-I made a mistake...!”

The girl folds her pinky back in and gives me a thumbs up. To think that she can make such a mistake; she’s really interesting.

“Do your, best.”

Ohh, there’s strength rising within me...!

“Right, I’m going to overtake Rodin!”

“...”

“Don’t show me a ‘that’s too reckless’ expression!”

Even though I know how brazen that wish is!

Motivated, I put my hand on the door handle, and hear the brightest and most energetic voice I heard up till this point from behind.

“...G-Good luck!”

I turn around and say to the girl with utmost will,

“I’m going out!”

Both of us grin and nod at the same time.

Three minutes will decide an interview.

Not 3 seconds, and not 30 seconds. An appearance or the beginning chatter will not determine an immediate impression.

Even so, the time isn’t long, so there’s no room to add on any added conditions or explanation.

For as long as there’s 3 minutes, I can only truthfully convey my thoughts.

And it has to be the most important things when I want to say so.

If I can still meet her again in April, I'll ask her what kind of impression she had of me during those first 3 minutes.